



Aruba's ONLY English newspaper



Hundreds of University of Michigan students wait in line to register to vote at the Ann Arbor city clerk's satellite office at the university's Museum of Art on Nov. 8, 2022.

Associated Press

New year expected to bring more changes to state voting laws

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and
ACACIA CORONADO
Associated Press

State lawmakers around the country introduced thousands of bills to change the way elections are run after former President Donald Trump falsely blamed his 2020 loss on voter fraud. Hundreds became law. Even with proponents of Trump's election lies roundly defeated during this year's midterms, advocates on both sides of the voting debate are bracing for another round of election-related legislation. Republicans are eager to tighten election rules further while Democrats, who took control of two additional statehouses, will seek to make it easier to cast a ballot. Minnesota's newly reelected Democratic secretary of state, Steve Simon, said he had spoken to several secretaries of state who are eager to push for changes in vot-

ing. Losses by election-denier candidates in top races have emboldened some Democrats to champion expansions of voting rights.

"Voters spoke loudly and clearly about what they wanted and didn't want, both in regards to this office and all these other issues," said Simon, who defeated a Republican challenger who parroted some of Trump's lies about the 2020 election. Democrats won majorities in both houses of the Minnesota Legislature in November, giving Simon a good shot at enacting changes. He expects to urge lawmakers to adopt automatic voter registration and allow high school students to pre-register. States routinely make adjustments in their voting laws — some subtle, some dramatic.

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Four female monarchs crowned during the Children and Youth Dande Festival 2022



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Oranjestad to be next Culinary Capital of the Caribbean



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New year expected to bring more changes to state voting laws

Continued from Front

But experts have never seen an explosion of legislation like that which followed the 2020 presidential election, when more than 3,600 election bills were introduced, according to the Voting Rights Lab, which tracks the legislation.

Liz Avore, senior adviser to the group, said 22 states in the last couple of years expanded access to the ballot, 10 created new restrictions and five expanded access in some ways while creating new barriers in others. This, she said, has created a divide in the U.S. in which “your ZIP code determines your access to our democracy.”

That divide seems likely to grow next year. Legislatures won't convene until January at the earliest, so it's unclear how many bills are being drafted and on which subjects. But Texas, where the Legislature meets only once every two years and lawmakers can “pre-file” drafts of legislation for the upcoming session, offers a preview.

The Associated Press has identified nearly 100 election-related legislative proposals already filed in the state, both to increase access to the ballot box and to further restrict it. This includes one that would allow the state's top lawyer to assign a prosecutor focused on election crimes, testing the boundaries of a court ruling earlier this year that said the attorney general did not have the authority to prosecute election crimes.



Election worker Ramona Ortiz places a sign outside a polling station at Fire Station 3 on E. Rio Grande Ave in El Paso, Texas, just before polls open on Nov. 8, 2022.

Associated Press

Another would assign a group of peace officers to serve as election marshals who investigate claims of election-related missteps. That would follow the lead of Florida, where officers in a special unit assigned to elections have already made a handful of arrests — including of people who mistakenly thought they were eligible to vote under a 2018 constitutional amendment restoring voting rights to some felons. Critics have labeled the unit a political tool of the governor.

Matt Simpson, a senior attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, said current election legislation proposed in the state, such as increasing criminal penalties for election crimes and creating election marshals, is “extreme” and “very intimidating” for voters. He said these approaches are primarily political and don't solve actual voting-related issues, such as high rejection rates of mail ballots and ballot applications due to widespread confusion on the identification numbers necessary.

“It is certainly the case that Texas elections do not have widespread fraud,” Simpson said. “These bills, these concerns that are raised, are solutions in search of a problem.”

The reliability of Texas' elections was underscored by the release earlier this month of an audit by the secretary of state's office. The 359-page audit of the 2020 election in the state's two largest Democratic counties and two largest Republican ones found some “irregularities,” but they were largely related to holding an election during a pandemic.

“In most cases, the audit found that the counties followed their procedures and clearly documented their activities,” the audit says. Ohio is another Republican-controlled state where

lawmakers continue to push for restrictions.

The state is likely to draw national attention next year after Republicans indicated they might try again to place on the May ballot a measure requiring a 60% majority for any future constitutional amendments to pass. That provision could limit the ability of Ohio voters to rein in GOP gerrymandering or otherwise counter the majority-Republican Legislature, such as by codifying the right to an abortion.

Republicans failed to muster enough votes during December's lame-duck session to place the higher threshold for passing amendments on the ballot, but they did pass a sweeping election law overhaul. The bill adds a photo ID requirement for voters and provides them for free, codifies a directive requiring one ballot drop box per county and eliminates early voting on the Monday before Election Day — county officials had said it interfered with their final preparations. The legislation also shrinks the window for receiving mail-in ballots after the election from 10 days to four.

Republican state Sen. Theresa Gavarone said taking steps to tighten access to the voting booth and speed vote counting are aimed at improving the “perception, confidence and integrity” in elections. “Folks, perception matters,” Gavarone said. “Whether you want to believe it or not, the goal should not just be to secure our elections,

but it's imperative that we give people doubting the results of our elections reason to participate in them.” Voting rights advocates were outraged.

“This legislation will make voting unnecessarily harder for seniors, students, rural Ohioans, active-duty military and other eligible Ohioans,” said Jen Miller, executive director of the League of Women Voters Ohio.

The office of Republican Gov. Mike DeWine said he was reviewing the legislation.

Democrats are readying their own pushes, especially in two states where they won control of the legislatures and retained the governorship — Michigan and Minnesota. “There will need to be quite a bit of implementation legislation next term, and I look forward to working with the Legislature and the governor's office to enact this,” Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum, a Democrat, said in an interview. Jake Rollow, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of State, said Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson will likely ask lawmakers to allocate \$100 million annually for local election offices and propose new measures against circulating election misinformation. A Democratic state lawmaker also proposed imposing penalties for people who pressure election workers, a key cause of Democrats in state legislatures after conspiracy theorists targeted voting officials after the 2020 presidential election. □

US Census Bureau redefines meaning of 'urban' America

By MIKE SCHNEIDER

Associated Press

More than 1,100 cities, towns and villages in the U.S. lost their status as urban areas on Thursday as the U.S. Census Bureau released a new list of places considered urban based on revised criteria.

Around 4.2 million residents living in 1,140 small cities, hamlets, towns and villages that lost their urban designation were bumped into the rural category. The new criteria raised the population threshold from 2,500 to 5,000 people and housing units were added to the definition.

The change matters because rural and urban areas often qualify for different types of federal funding for transportation, housing, health care, education and agriculture. The federal government doesn't have a standard definition of urban or rural, but the Census Bureau's definition often provides a baseline. "The whole thing about urban and rural is all about money," said Mary Craigle, bureau chief for Montana's Research and Information Services. "Places that qualify as urban are eligible for transportation dollars that rural areas aren't, and then rural areas are eligible



Tourists look out onto the city skyline from Christmas Tree Point on top of Twin Peaks in San Francisco, Thursday, Dec. 15, 2022.

for dollars that urban areas are not." The Census Bureau this year made the biggest modification in decades to the definition of an urban area. The bureau adjusts the definition every decade after a census to address any changes or needs of policymakers and researchers. The bureau says it is done for statistical purposes and it has no control over how government agencies use the definitions to distribute funding. There were 2,646 urban ar-

reas in the mainland U.S., Puerto Rico and U.S. islands on the new list released Thursday.

"This change in definition is a big deal and a substantial change from the Census Bureau's long-standing procedures," said Kenneth Johnson, a senior demographer at the University of New Hampshire. "It has significant implications both for policy and for researchers." Under the old criteria, an urbanized area needed to have at least

50,000 residents. An urban cluster was defined as having at least 2,500 people, a threshold that had been around since 1910. Under this definition, almost 81% of the U.S. was urban and 19% was rural over the past decade. Under the new definition, hammered out after the 2020 census, the minimum population required for an area to be considered urban doubled to 5,000 people. Originally, the Census Bureau proposed raising the threshold

to 10,000 people but pulled back amid opposition. The new criteria for urban areas shift the urban-rural ratio slightly, to 79.6% and 20.4%, respectively.

In 1910, a town with 2,500 residents had a lot more goods and services than a town that size does today, "and these new definitions acknowledge that," said Michael Cline, North Carolina's state demographer. With the new criteria, the distinction between an urbanized area and an urban cluster has been eliminated since the Census Bureau determined there was little difference in economic activities between communities larger and smaller than 50,000 residents.

For the first time, the Census Bureau is adding housing units to the definition of an urban area. A place can be considered urban if it has at least 2,000 housing units, based on the calculation that the average household has 2.5 people. Among the beneficiaries of using housing instead of people are resort towns in ski or beach destinations, or other places with lots of vacation homes, since they can qualify as urban based on the number of homes instead of full-time residents. □

Associated Press

Appeals court halts federal takeover of Mississippi jail

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi's largest county won a legal victory Wednesday in its effort to stave off a rare federal takeover of its jail, where a judge has found "ongoing unconstitutional conditions" for prisoners.

The U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals stayed a lower court's order putting the Raymond Detention Center into receivership until it rules on the county's motion for reconsideration. The court will also look at whether the lower court's injunction complies with the Prison Litigation Reform Act, a 1996 federal law that places restrictions on law-

suits brought by prisoners. Hinds County officials applauded the move to delay work by the receiver, who attorneys for the county said would be "utterly unaccountable" to voters and taxpayers.

"We are still facing the day-to-day challenges at the jail, but we are thankful for the opportunity for another court to look at the situation and see that the Hinds County Sheriff and Hinds County Board of Supervisors have been doing something right in this situation," Hinds County Sheriff Tyree Jones told WLBT-TV. On July 29, U.S. District

Judge Carlton Reeves put the jail into receivership after citing poor conditions at the facility. The judge said deficiencies in supervision and staffing lead to "a stunning array of assaults, as well as deaths." Seven people died last year while detained at the jail, he said. At that point, federal and state judges had ordered receiverships or a similar transfer of control for prisons and jails only about eight times, according to Hernandez Stroud, an attorney at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.

On Oct. 31, Reeves ap-



Rolls of razor wire line the top of the security fencing at the Raymond Detention Center in Raymond, Miss., on Aug. 1, 2022. Associated Press

pointed Wendell M. France Sr., a public safety consultant, former correctional administrator and 27-year member of the Baltimore Police Department, to improve conditions at the jail outside Jackson.

France was scheduled to

assume operational control over the jail on January 1, 2023.

According to the terms of the receivership, France has 120 days from his appointment to develop a draft plan to improve conditions at the jail. □

Think those bags are recyclable? California says think again

By **DON THOMPSON**

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— Since California adopted the nation's first ban on single-use plastic shopping bags in 2014, most grocery stores have turned to thicker, reusable plastic bags that are supposed to be recyclable.

But Attorney General Rob Bonta is now investigating whether the bags are truly recyclable as required by law. "We've all been to the store and forgotten to bring our reusable bags," Bonta said recently. "At least the plastic bags we buy at the register for 10 cents have those 'chasing arrows' that say they are 100% recyclable, right? Perhaps wrong."

He asked six bag manufacturers to back up their claims that the bags can be recycled and threatened legal action that could include banning the bags temporarily or issuing multimillion-dollar fines.

His office declined to say last week how many of the companies responded, citing an ongoing investigation. The American Chemistry Council, a plastics industry group, said that manufacturers disagree with Bonta's characterization.

Other states, including New York, New Jersey and Oregon, have followed Cali-



This Friday, Jan. 24, 2014 file photo conveyors carry mixed plastic into a device that will shred recycle them at a plastics recycling plant in Vernon, Calif.

fornia in banning single-use plastic bags. Beyond California, only a handful of states require that stores take back plastic bags for recycling, with Maine first adopting such a law in 1991, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Policy experts and advocates estimate that just 6% of plastics are recycled in the United States, with the remaining burned, trashed or littered. More plastic bags ended up in California landfills in 2021 compared with 2018, according to data from the state's

recycling department.

Californians Against Waste Executive Director Mark Murray in part blames pandemic policies.

Consumers are supposed to be able to return their plastic bags to grocery stores and other retailers. But many removed their bag recycling bins during the early days of the pandemic, fearing contamination.

For the system to work, retailers must collect the bags and sell them back to manufacturers for use in making new bags that must include 40% recycled

content and be reusable at least 125 times. Murray suspects that most are re-used once.

"That's not meeting the standard and it may be time to phase these bags out," he said.

The California Retailers Association declined comment because it said each retailer has its own policy, and the California Grocers Association did not respond to a request for comment.

As of now, makers of the bags get to self-certify to the state that their bags can be recycled. But Bonta said that requires a com-

prehensive system to collect, process and sell the used bags, none of which exist. Putting the bags in most curbside recycling bins interferes with recycling other products by clogging equipment and increasing the risk of worker injury, he said.

Plastic bags and similar products are "a top form of contamination in curbside recycling bins," California's Statewide Commission on Recycling Markets and Curbside Recycling wrote in a 2021 report.

Bonta asked six manufacturers Novolex, Revolution, Inteplast, Advance Polybag, Metro Polybag and Papier-Mettler to prove their bags can be recycled in California. His office hasn't said if they all responded, citing an "active and ongoing investigation."

Revolution Chief Executive Sean Whiteley said the company has been recycling more than 300 million pounds of plastic material annually for decades and is "confident in our own sustainability and compliance record."

He noted lawmakers publicly introduced the single-use bag ban legislation in 2014 at one of the company's Southern California subsidiaries. □

Associated Press

Whale Watch Week returns in-person in Oregon after pandemic

By **CLAIRE RUSH**

Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)

Whale Watch Week in Oregon returned in-person for the first time since the pandemic on Wednesday, drawing visitors hoping to catch a glimpse of the annual gray whale migration to the state's coastline.

By early afternoon, more than 500 people had flocked to the Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay, where a volunteer equipped with binoculars pointed out whales in the distance. A spokesperson for Oregon State Parks, which organizes the event, described scenes of ex-

cited spectators as several were spotted.

"She's seeing the spray and calling it out," Stefanie Knowlton told The Associated Press on the phone as she watched the center's volunteer, the crowd cheering in the background. "There's just so much energy. You could just really feel that people were ready to come back and watch whales together."

Volunteers will be at 17 state parks along the coast through Sunday to help people spot the nearly 20,000 gray whales that make the southward journey to Mexico every year. One of the sites, Cape

Meares, was closed Wednesday after strong winds the previous day knocked over trees, Knowlton said.

Oregon State Parks organizes whale-watching events twice a year, in the winter for gray whales' southern migration and in the spring for their return to northern waters near Alaska.

Oregon's central coast is also a hot spot for whale-watching from June to mid-November, when the gray whales that remained in the state's coastal waters during the summer migration come close to shore to feed, according to the agency. □



In this photo provided by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, a sign at the Whale Watch Center in Depoe Bay, Ore., directs visitors to whale watch volunteers on Wed., Dec. 28, 2022.

Associated Press

EU doesn't follow Italy with COVID checks on China arrivals

By **RAF CASERT**
Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union is assessing Beijing's rollback of its strict anti-infection controls but refrained Thursday from immediately following EU member Italy in requiring coronavirus tests for airline passengers coming from China.

Health officials from the 27-member bloc promised to continue talks on seeking a common approach to travel rules. However, the EU's executive arm said the BF.7 omicron variant prevalent in China was already circulating in Europe and that its threat had not significantly grown.

"However, we remain vigilant and will be ready to use the emergency brake if necessary," the European Commission said in a statement.

Even though virus experts in the EU have played down the immediate danger, Italy made coronavirus tests mandatory for all airline passengers arriving from China.

More than 50% of people screened upon arrival at Milan's Malpensa airport in



Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni holds her year-end press conference in Rome, Thursday, Dec. 29, 2022.

recent days tested positive for the virus.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni on Thursday increased pressure on the EU to join Italy's approach. She said requiring COVID tests of all passengers from China "is only effective if it is taken at the European level," noting that many arrive in Italy on connecting flights through other European

countries.

Considering the reluctance from several EU nations and experts, the EU's health security committee said in a statement after meeting Thursday that "we need to act jointly and will continue our discussions."

Holding off was certainly something Germany wanted. "There is no indication that a more dangerous vari-

ant has developed in this outbreak in China ... which would bring corresponding travel restrictions," Health Ministry spokesman Sebastian Guelde said.

A coordinated EU approach is necessary since almost all EU member nations are part of Europe's visa-free Schengen Area. The unrestricted travel means that testing in one nation

would not be very effective since travelers from China could enter from another EU nation and spread the virus.

After strict travel restrictions at the height of the pandemic, the EU returned to a pre-pandemic system of free travel this fall, but member nations agreed that an "emergency brake" could be activated at short notice to meet an unexpected challenge.

"At a scientific level, there is no reason at this stage to reimpose specific border controls," Professor Brigitte Autran, a vaccines expert for France's health ministry, told Radio Classique on Thursday.

And even Italy's health minister came with some good news Thursday. Orazio Schillaci told the Senate in Rome that sequencing indicates the variants detected in passengers arriving from China are already in circulation in Europe, somewhat easing fears that a new variant from China could start running amok in Europe.

"This is the most important and reassuring news," Schillaci said. □

Associated Press

Brazil's Lula appoints record-high 11 women to his cabinet

By **DIANE JEANTET**
Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazilian President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva completed its future cabinet on Thursday with the appointment of 16 ministers, just three days before he is officially sworn-in.

As anticipated, Lula picked Amazon activist Marina Silva as his environment minister. He also announced his planning minister will be Simone Tebet, a former rival turned valuable ally during the electoral campaign.

An Indigenous woman, Sônia Guajajara, will lead the country's first-ever ministry for Indigenous peoples. In total, Lula has appointed 11 women in his future government, which will take of-

fice in the new year — more than any previous administration.

"After a lot of work, after a lot tension, talk and adjustments, we finished assembling the first echelon of the government," said Lula, who spent weeks naming all 37 future ministers.

To win a particularly tight election against incumbent Jair Bolsonaro, the former leftist leader has had to seek allies outside of the Workers' Party he launched four decades ago, promising a "broad front" against the far-right.

Meanwhile, Bolsonaro has remained silent as police said Thursday it was looking for more than 30 of his supporters who have been accused of trying to invade

the federal police headquarters in Brasilia earlier this month.

Authorities said in a news conference Thursday that the suspects, most of whom are Bolsonaro supporters, also vandalized a police precinct and set several vehicles and buses on fire. Police said officers were serving 11 arrests warrants and 21 search and seizure warrants in several states, including Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, as part of "Operation Nero." They have so far made four arrests. Brazilian authorities have been faced with outbreaks of violence following Bolsonaro's loss in the Oct. 30 election to President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Angry backers of the

far-right leader who refuse to acknowledge his defeat have blocked roads and highways, set vehicles

on fires and camped outside military buildings asking for the armed forces to intervene. □



Brazil's President-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his newly-named Minister of Indigenous Peoples Sonia Guajajara, pose for photos during a meeting where he announced the ministers for his incoming government, in Brasilia, Brazil, Thursday, Dec. 29, 2022. Lula will be sworn-in on Jan. 1, 2023.

Associated Press

Massive fire at Cambodia hotel casino kills at least 19

By **HENG SINITH** and **SO-PHENG CHEANG**

Associated Press

POIPET, Cambodia (AP) —

A massive fire at a Cambodian hotel casino Thursday injured over 60 people and killed at least 19 — a number that officials warned would rise after the search for bodies resumes Friday.

The blaze, which started around midnight Wednesday, was put out over 12 hours later at 2 p.m. Thursday, said Sek Sokhom, head of Banteay Meanchey province's information department. He said more than 60 people were injured and the death toll was expected to rise once rescuers are able to access victims who were believed to still be under debris or in locked rooms.

Videos posted on social media showed people falling from a roof after they were trapped by the fire at the Grand Diamond City casino and hotel in the town of Poipet.

In a video posted by Cambodia's firefighting agency, a crowd could be heard shouting pleas to rescue people trapped on the roof of the hotel complex, which is more than a dozen stories tall at its highest point. The



In this photo provided by Cambodia's Fresh News, a building burns near a Cambodia-Thai international border gate in Poipet, west of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Thursday Dec. 29, 2022.

Associated Press

video showed at least one person falling as the flames reached the roof.

"Oh, please help rescue them. Pump water, pump water!" shouted onlookers. The Department of Fire Prevention, Extinguishing and Rescue said it heard calls for help at 4 a.m. emanating from rooms on the 13th, 14th and 15th floors. Hands

and even a mobile phone's flashlight were seen waving from windows inside the complex.

"The fire was massive, and was inside the casino, so it was difficult for our water cannons to reach it," said a firefighter in the video posted online by the fire department.

Many of those inside, both

customers and staff, were from neighboring Thailand, which sent firetrucks and emergency workers Thursday to help cope with the crisis in the bustling border town.

An initial investigation found that the fire may have been caused New Year's holiday decorations drawing too much electric-

ity, causing wires to overheat and burn, Sek Sokhom said.

The dead and injured comprised people of several nationalities, including Thai, Chinese, Malaysian, Vietnamese and Cambodian, he said.

A local Buddhist temple was being used to receive their bodies.

The Grand Diamond City casino complex has 500 employees, and had 1,000 customers Wednesday, according to a report from Soth Kimkolmony, a spokesperson for Cambodia's National Committee for Disaster Management. It was unclear how many were present when the fire broke out.

"Right now, we are trying to bring the dead bodies from the building down. I don't think there will be any survivors because of very thick smoke.

Even we all (the rescue staff) have to wear proper gear when we go inside the building, otherwise we cannot breathe at all," said Montri Khaosa-ard, a staff member of Thailand Ruamkatanyu Foundation, a social welfare organization that sends volunteers to disaster scenes. □

Philippines' Marcos seeks agreements in China amid tensions

MANILA, Philippines (AP) —

The Philippines says President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. hopes to sign a number of agreements during a visit to Beijing next week that comes amid ongoing territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

A statement from the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs on Thursday said a number of projects were under discussion, including in agriculture, renewable energy, nickel processing, tourism and bridge construction.

Marcos is due to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping during his Jan. 3-5 visit at the head of a large business delegation. China ac-

counts for 20% of the Philippines' foreign trade and is also a major source of for-

eign direct investment. Despite those economic ties, the sides have repeat-



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. arrives to attend the APEC Leader's Informal Dialogue with Guests during the APEC summit in Bangkok, Thailand, on Nov. 18, 2022.

Associated Press

edly feuded over China's claims to islands and waters in the strategically key South China Sea, referred to by Manila as the West Philippine Sea. During the visit, the sides plan to sign an agreement to boost communication between diplomats at various levels to "avoid miscalculations" over such issues, Department of Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs Nathaniel Imperial was quoted as saying in the statement. China says it owns virtually the entire waterway, despite a 2016 arbitration ruling that invalidated Beijing's vast territorial claims on historical grounds in the

South China Sea. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also claim all or parts of the sea.

China has rejected the 2016 decision by an arbitration tribunal set up in The Hague under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea after the Philippine government complained about China's increasingly aggressive actions.

Those include China's turning seven disputed reefs into missile-protected islands in the disputed waters. Philippines treaty partner the U.S. says the developed islands, including three with military-grade runways, now resemble forward military bases. □

Oranjestad to be next Culinary Capital of the Caribbean

ORANJESTAD – With great enthusiasm, minister Geoffrey Wever in charge of the revitalization of Oranjestad said that soon the process will start to obtain the title of Culinary Capital awarded under the international program World Food Travel Association, and afterwards for City of Gastronomy under the international UNESCO program, City of Gastronomy.

Such titles will surely put Aruba on the international map and attract new and exclusive visitors to the city center in Oranjestad. An exercise that must give our investors more commercial opportunity and make Oranjestad a new attraction for locals and tourists.

What precisely is a culinary capital and how will this create new opportunities? The World Food and Travel Association (WFTA), the main authority worldwide regarding gastronomic tourism, designed this new program launched in 2021 to help regenerate interest in destinations that are not well-known for their high-quality and authentic gastronomic products and experiences.

After the Covid pandemic, world destinations and all businesses are trying to innovate and prepare for economy after Covid. Saying this, minister Wever thinks that as the government of Aruba they also need to innovate and adapt to the world economy after Covid. The participation of the government is essential if we want to achieve the revitalization of our city center, and applying for the status of Culinary Capital is a necessary action to innovate and create an elevated product Aruba. Aruba as a destination is one of two countries to recover fastest. However, our city center still has not managed to capitalize on the fruits of Aruba's success as a tourist destination.

The process to arrive to the Culinary Capital title

is tied to four essential criteria. These are culinary culture, culinary strategy, culinary promotion and culinary community – necessary criteria to determine if the destination has what is necessary to convert into a Culinary Capital. WFTA offers the accredited desti-

nations a series of benefits including an entire year of marketing and strategy activities.

Culinary destinations that are more well-known like San Francisco, Hong Kong and Paris benefitted from such recognition, and

WFTA wants to achieve this same success for countries less-known for their culinary authenticity. Small countries like Aruba, and specially our city center Oranjestad, need all the advantages offered by the Culinary Capital title. There is a pool of consum-

ers of touristic products that travel specifically to destinations that offer a local and unique gastronomic experience, and these are the consumers that minister Geoffrey Wever wants to attract to our city center. □

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Farmers Market at the Ostrich Farm

Every first Sunday of the month the Ostrich Farm organized and facilitate the largest farmers market on the island. Everything sold during the farmers market are locally crafted, produced and grown. Locally artisans and farmers gather at the farmers market to showcase proudly their products.

You can find the best artisan bread & pastries, hot sauces, jams, cooking sauces, fresh egg and honey that comes from small beekeepers, vegetarian snacks from locally soured beans call Dubaru.

Then you have the very talented local artisans that share their unique and one-of-a-kind art such as driftwood paintings, high quality jewelry, baby clothing, knitting products, ceramic mugs/cups and plates, Calabash art, organic soap and cosmetic and so much more!

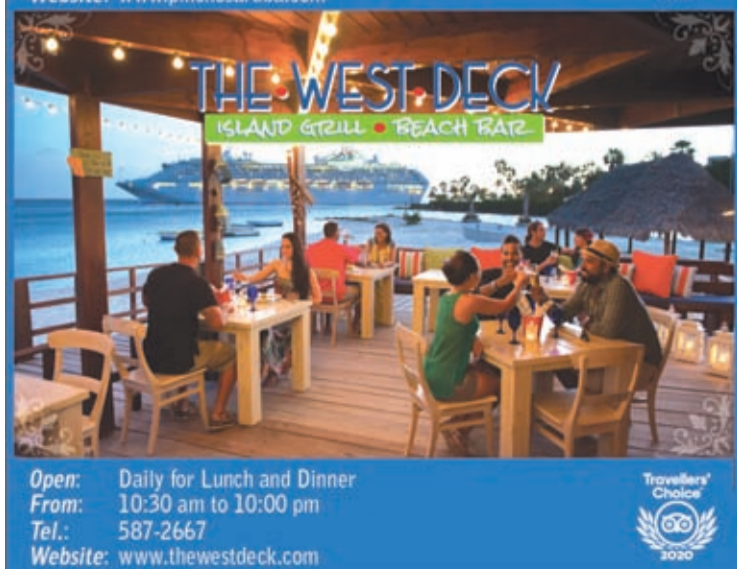
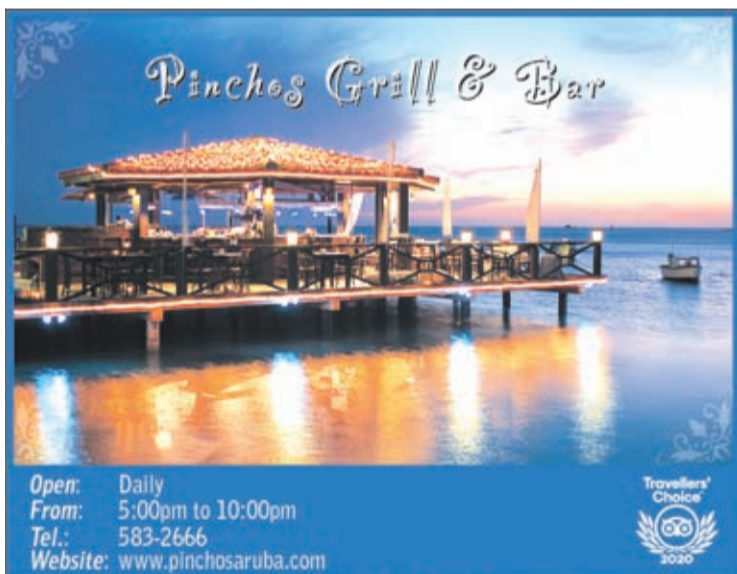
The Farmer's market is held under a large, covered area so you can shop comfortably in the shade.

The restaurant in the premises serves delicious local



lunches and fresh fish when available. Ice cold local beer, smoothies, fresh fruit shakes and not to be missed serves the best shaved ice on the island! And the Ostrich tours is of course offered as well.

For everybody young and old here is something to do, shop, relax and enjoy a great family outing and most of all come and support the local artisans and farmers every first Sunday of the month from 10:00 to 14:00, Matividiri 57, follow our facebook-page or Instagram @arubaostrichfarm and be notified for each upcoming farmers market. □



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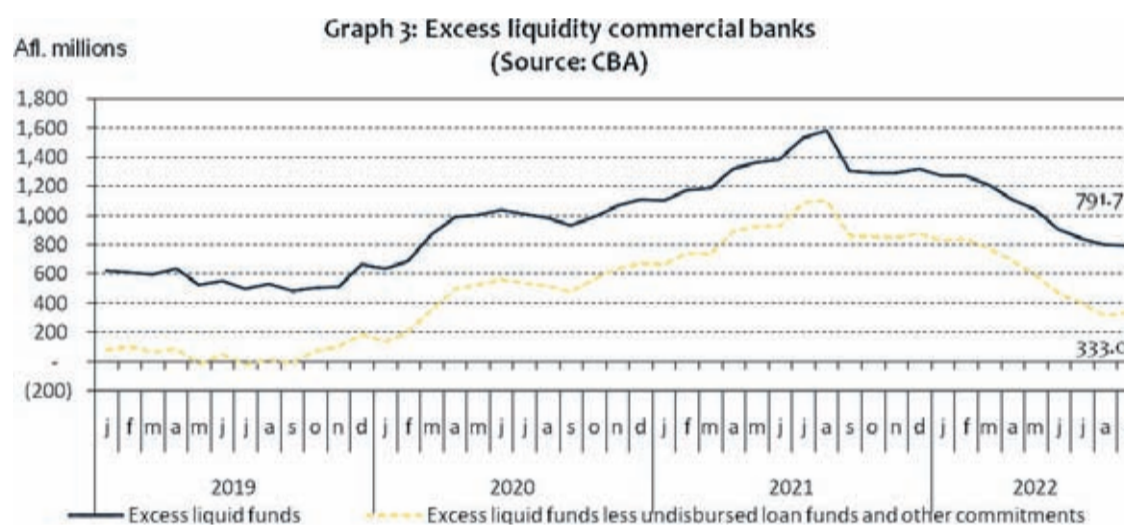
Play Responsibly. Visit www.gamblersanonymous.org if you or someone you know has a gambling problem.**Part 2****The CBA raised the reserve requirement by 1.0 percentage point as of December 1, 2022**

Oranjestad - In line with the Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) task to evaluate, determine, and provide transparency on the monetary policy actions of the Central Bank of Aruba (CBA), the CBA communicates the following.

During its meeting on November 22, 2022, the MPC decided to increase the reserve requirement from 24.0 percent to 25.0 percent as of December 1, 2022. Accordingly, commercial banks must hold a minimum balance at the CBA equal to 25.0 percent of their clients' short-term deposits. The decision to expand the reserve requirement to 25.0 percent was based mainly on the diminished pace of decline in the commercial banks' excess liquidity, as well as the still ample level of excess liquidity at the commercial banks, which persists well above the pre-pandemic and precautionary levels.

Inflation

In September 2022, the consumer price index (CPI) rose by 7.0 percent compared to the same month of the previous year (Graph 2). This jump in the CPI was caused by higher utility prices, which affected the 'housing' component (2.9 percentage points contribution). Moreover, gasoline prices, mainly influencing the 'transport' component (1.6 percent-



age points contribution), and the 'food' component rose (1.2 percentage points contribution).

The 12-month average inflation amounted to 4.7 percent. The CBA anticipates increasing inflationary pressures for the remainder of 2022, due to

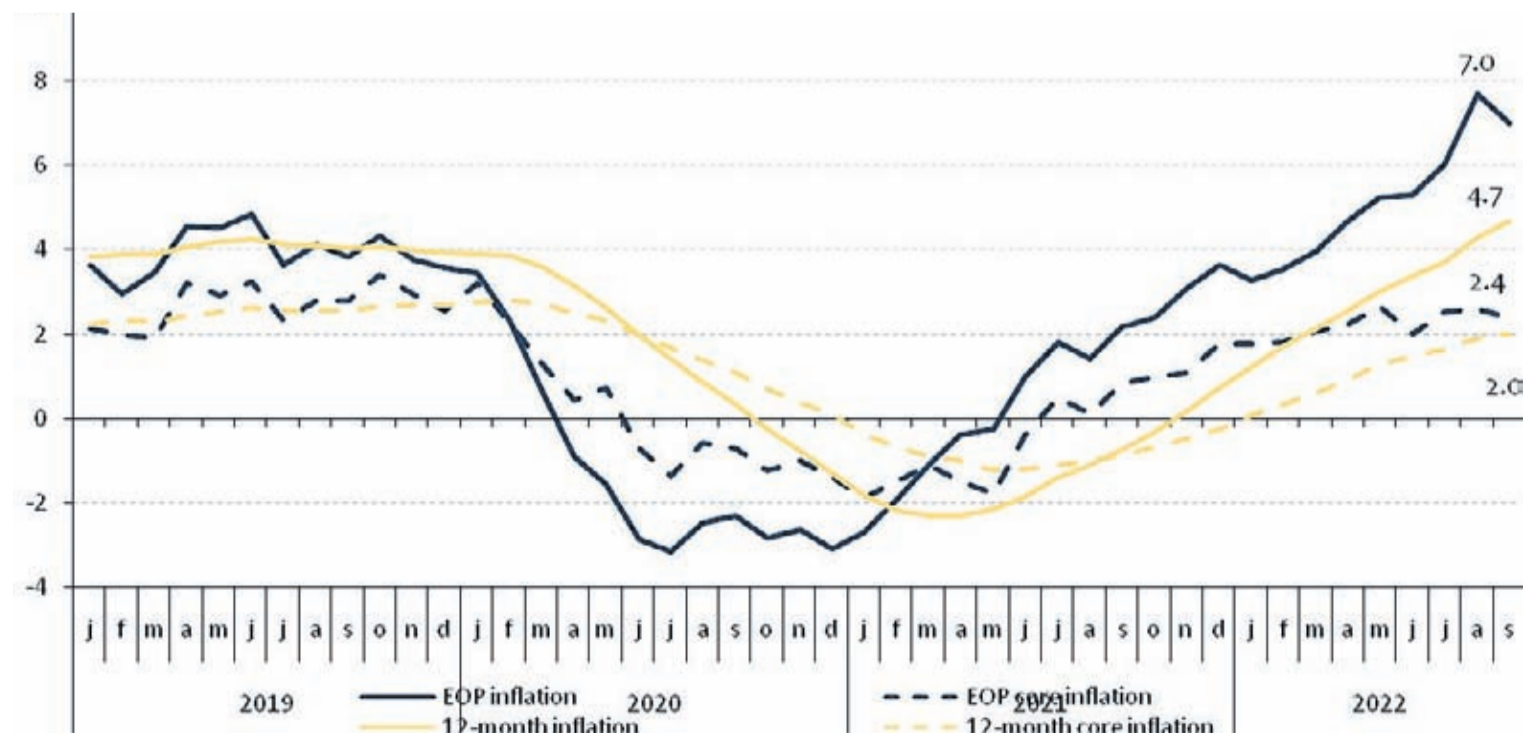
the elevated oil price on international markets, as well as the recent hikes in utility tariffs. Furthermore, the expectation is that Aruba will import much of the soaring prices from its export partners, particularly the United States and Europe.

Meanwhile, in September

2022, core inflation (excluding energy and food) reached 2.4 percent on a year-over-year basis, driven mainly by the 'transport' component (1.2 percentage points contribution). On a twelve-month average basis, core inflation amounted to 2.0 percent.

Commercial bank excess liquidity

Aggregated excess liquidity fell from Afl. 1,320.5 million in December 2021 to Afl. 791.7 million in September 2022 (Graph 3). This drop was principally due to the consecutive hikes in the reserve requirement from January 2022 to July 2022. In September 2022, excess liquidity contracted further, albeit at a decreasing pace. Furthermore, excess liquidity remained above the pre-pandemic level of February 2020 (+Afl. 102.6 million) as well as the levels of liquidity needed for precautionary motives. The heightened level of excess liquidity likely resulted from the subdued credit expansion and the recovery in the tourism sector. □





ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The his-

toric shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.



Aruba's underwater wonderland

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.



Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

ture. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □

Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant tempera-



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The Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA) informs that the silver 5 Florin commemorative coin "Warawara" is obtainable as of December 29, 2022 at the CBA.

The crested caracara is called 'Warawara' in Papiamentu. The Warawara is a bird of prey that is increasingly common in Aruba. The Warawara is a scavenger that occasionally also eats lizards, mice, and goat carcasses among others. It produces a rattling screaming sound, often throwing its head back. The Warawara has a wingspan of 120 cm wide, and is brown-black in color. There is no difference in appearance between the male and female Warawara. A fun fact about the Warawara is that it would rather walk than fly.

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Four female monarchs crowned during the Children and Youth Dande Festival 2022

ORANJESTAD – Last Wednesday at the Centro di Bario Tanki Leendert, the Children and Youth Dande Festival took place with the presentation of seven musical group and 19 contestants, who gave their all on this night to show that Aruba's Dande tradition is still alive.

Dande

The most traditional cultural intangible heritage Aruba has throughout the Christmas season is called Dande. The Dande is a local oral tradition where the song "ay nobe" (año nobo) – "new year" is performed as the New Year is approaching or has arrived. Dande stems from the word Dandalia, which loosely translates into "to party, he who parties, or simply paranda". The first sentence of the Dande song "oh dande nos a jega na bo porta" – Ay Nobe, translated means "Oh the party has arrived at your door" – New Year. The origin of the Dande is not known, however there are many theories such as; 1. Its starting in the district of Savaneta, 2. Its starting in the district of Noord, 3. Its popularity strengthened in the district of St. Cruz, or 4. Its starting after the abolition of slavery in 1863 by the Dutch King.

A group of five or sometimes even six people (one singer accompanied by numerous musicians) usually performs the most known Aruban end of the year tradition. These people, usually family members accompany a singer and travel door-to-door to express their best wishes for the New Year in repetitive phrases (blessings), with a chorus that includes the phrase "ay nobe" (año nobo) – "new year" – sung after each blessing. Currently, the celebratory travel usually leads to the houses of the singers' friends and family, where the singer collects money in his hat to give to the group. Traditionally the removal of the



singer's hat is considered a sign of respect he/she is expressing to the family and person they are singing to and blessing. Instead of money, back in the day, the singer would receive food (for example pan dushi "sweet bread") in their hat as a token of gratitude for their long trip. The singer starts by blessing the head of the house and then one

by one passes to every person present. Besides visiting local houses on New Year's Eve and the day after, the Dande tradition is very popular on the last working day of the year. Local businesses invite a Dande group to come and bless their workers and the company as the New Year approaches.



For more information about year-end celebrations in Aruba, please visit <https://www.arubatoday.com/culture-for-christmas/>

Children and Youth Dande Festival 2022

Under organization of the Commission for the Celebration of National Days of the Department of Culture, UNOCA and Chico Harms foundation – which organized the Festival itself last Tuesday at the Centro di Bario Brazil – the night began around 7pm to give opportunity to every participant to show their talent.

The winners were as follow:
Category 4-6 years:
Dande Queen 2022: Alyna Henriquez.
Finalists: Zaden Werleman and Sophia da Silva.

Category 7-9 years:
Dande Queen 2022: Kitai de Jongh.
Finalists: Elizée Bislip, Ksijaily Croes and Jaymerson Kelly.

Category 10-12 years:
Dande Queen: Lizienne Webb.
Second Place: John-Maynard Wever.

Category 13-17 years:
Dande Queen: Jorienne Angela
Second Place: Stephanie Quant and Third Place: Reanne Ras.

The Commission for the Promotion of Culture sends congratulations to all children, musicians, typical groups, band directors, composers, arrangers and the entire family, not leaving out the excellent work of the organizing team for a great event. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Farm sights
- 6 Until now
- 11 Fancy flapjack
- 12 Find darling
- 13 Comedic tribute
- 14 Relates
- 15 Wrap up
- 16 Flowery ring
- 18 Permit
- 19 Funny fellow
- 20 Tourist stop
- 21 Binary digit
- 22 Flaky rock
- 24 Really impressed
- 25 Contest hopeful
- 27 Pool tool
- 29 Choice word
- 32 Tough wood
- 33 Links number
- 34 New Haven student
- 35 Mud bath site
- 36 Company abbr.
- 37 Millinery buy

DOWN

- 38 Date qualifier
- 40 Skilled
- 42 Inert gas
- 43 Pithy
- 44 City of West Yorkshire
- 45 Town leader
- 7 Keats work
- 8 Do what everyone else is doing
- 9 Dahl of films
- 10 Sat for a spell
- 17 Plead
- 23 Quill need
- 24 Wee worker
- 26 When a show is shown
- 27 Knave
- 28 Have high hopes
- 30 Go by
- 31 Singer Tex
- 33 Schemes
- 39 Atlantic fish
- 41 Singer Shannon

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Yesterday's answer

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3					14				
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9			20				21		
22			23			24			
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32			33				34		
35			36				37		
38			39		40	41			
42					43				
44					45				

12-30

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-30

CRYPTOQUOTE

NTM MYOF KYNGVS MBTF JB

LGCCBW HGIZ NTSGK TVW

WFBTND TVW SYW NTWVBDD.

— VBGC STGNTV

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: BE AT WAR WITH YOUR VICES, AT PEACE WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS, AND LET EVERY NEW YEAR FIND YOU A BETTER MAN. — BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Liz Weston: How to complain and get results

By LIZ WESTON of NerdWallet

If you feel you have more to complain about these days, you may be right.

The products we use are increasingly complex, which often means they have more ways to malfunction. Companies are still struggling to hire and retain workers, so the customer service representatives who are supposed to help you may not know how. And that's if you can even get through to a human being after navigating websites, automated chatbots and phone systems that seem designed to thwart you at every turn.

"You're searching for where to call. Once you get through, you're going to yell 'agent!' in the phone 12 times, and then they send you to the wrong place," says Scott M. Broetzmann, chief executive of research firm Customer Care Measurement & Consulting in Alexandria, Virginia.

On average, customers made 2.9 contacts with a company while attempting to resolve problems, according to the firm's 2020 National Customer Rage Study, which polled 1,026 consumers about problems with products or services in the past 12 months. A whopping 58% of respondents who complained got nothing zero, zilch as a result of their efforts. So perhaps it's not surprising that 65% of those who had a problem experienced consumer rage.

If you want to improve your odds of getting results, and lower your blood pressure, consider the following tips for complaining effectively.



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

Associated Press

ly.

PREPARE TO PERSEVERE

Broetzmann urges people to "pick their battles," given how much effort is typically required to solve problems and how often they occur. The 2020 study found 66% of American households had at least one problem with products and services they purchased during the past 12 months, compared with 56% in the 2017 version of the survey.

Kevin Doyle, an editor at Consumer Reports, suggests people gather all the documentation they might need before reaching out to a company. That could include account, confirmation and order numbers, warranties and notes from previous interactions with company representatives, for example. Missing information could force you to start over on whatever phone or digital system you're using to complain.

CHOOSE YOUR VENUE

People who make complaints are about as likely

to use digital tools such as email, live chats, company websites and social media as they are to pick up the phone, the 2020 study found.

Social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter have the advantage of being public, which puts some pressure on the company to resolve the problem. Posting your complaint on social media also bypasses the chatbots, phone trees, hold times and malfunctioning voice recognition software that can make customer service such a trial.

But of the 14% of respondents who used social media to complain about their worst problem, nearly half didn't receive a response from the company, according to the study. So if you're tempted to turn to social media first, be ready to have a backup plan that involves connecting with a human by phone, email or chat.

BE CONCISE

Part of your preparation should be boiling down your complaint to the essentials, including what happened and more importantly how you want the company to fix it. Too many consumers aren't specific about what they want from the company, Broetzmann says.

Just make sure the remedy you suggest is commensurate with the problem, Doyle says. If the seatback TV didn't function on your flight, don't ask for a free ticket; ask for a credit for a drink or a meal on your next trip, he suggests.

"Are you going to get it? Who knows? But chances are, you're not going to get it unless you ask," Doyle says.

Resist the urge to explain every twist and turn of your journey, or to overstate your distress for dramatic effect. Extraneous details and exaggerations could make you easier to dismiss. "Stick to the facts," Doyle says. "Embellishing it is going to diminish your credibility." □

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Christmas tree recycling is a good alternative to landfills

By JOHN RABY
Associated Press

Taking down the Christmas tree is only one task after the holiday season. For those with a real tree, figuring out what to do with it can be as easy as placing it by the curb.

In most states, it can be the gift that keeps on giving. Discarded Christmas trees can be picked up curbside for recycling through regular trash-collection services in various cities. The trees are often shredded for use as compost or mulch that is offered back to residents and non-profit groups free of charge for gardening and landscaping.

In many states, natural resources workers collect whole trees at predetermined drop-off points to be placed in lakes and waterways as fish habitat.

In parts of Louisiana, for example, Christmas trees are used to shore up coastal areas hit by erosion and to rebuild wetlands. In Jefferson Parish alone, about 5,000 trees are collected each year for such efforts. Some zoos, including petting zoos, accept chemical- and ornament-free Christmas trees to feed to some animals, such as goats, pigs and elephants, and for sensory and entertainment purposes for others, like kangaroos, lions,



Joe Hyndman puts one of his family's Christmas trees on a pile at the Hamilton County Recycling Center on Crabtree Road on Dec. 28, 2015, in the Middle Valley community near Chattanooga, Tenn.

Associated Press

camels and rhinos.

Or, there's no place like home. Discarded trees can get their final resting place in a corner of the backyard as a shelter and feeding area for birds.

Be sure to remove the ornaments, lights and tinsel. Placing a tarp around the tree before taking it back outside will spare frustration in having to vacuum up the pine needles afterward.

Some websites offer a way to search for local tree re-

cycling programs. Home Depot stores in select areas also hold tree collection events.

But don't wait too long after Christmas because dried-out trees can be fire hazards. It's also dangerous to try to use a fireplace or wood stove to burn parts of the tree because the oils

in them could cause chimney fires.

Perhaps the worst place to send discarded live Christmas trees is a landfill because materials buried there break down into the greenhouse gas methane, considered more harmful than carbon dioxide. □



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'Corsage' gives a modern edge to Austria's Empress Elisabeth

By **LINDSEY BAHR**

AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Things had gotten a little real on the set of "Corsage," but nobody expected the star, Vicky Krieps, to jump out the window that day. The scene involved a fencing match between Krieps, playing Empress Elisabeth of Austria, and Florian Teichtmeister as Emperor Franz Joseph. It's a straightforward match and Elisabeth is supposed to be winning, in the midst of a tense argument. But Teichtmeister decided to change the choreography in the moment so he would win instead. The movie, which is now playing in limited release and recently made the shortlist for an Oscar nomination, was intended to be an empathetic examination of a misunderstood woman, trapped in the prison of her gender, her time, her position, her celebrity and her beauty. This was a moment where she got to be a little stronger than the man and a man had just taken it away.

It hit Krieps hard. When Teichtmeister exited, the scene was technically over, but Krieps was still in it. The director, Marie Kreutzer, kept the cameras rolling as she sometimes does and suddenly Krieps was crying. Then she walked over to the window and jumped. Everyone gasped. "Why is she going out the window?" the director of photography exclaimed. She was fine, mind you. The room was on the first floor. But it wasn't in the script. The film was actually, technically, Krieps' idea. She had been fascinated by the 19th century empress since she was a young girl, when unbeknownst to her feminist mother who repelled "princess things" she watched Ernst Marischka's "Sisi" trilogy at a friend's house. The 1950s films starring Romy Schneider, referred to by Elisabeth's nickname, are a holiday broadcast staple in Europe. As a teenager, Krieps went a little further and picked up a biography.

"I was always suspicious

of anything too nice and perfect. I was too young to really rationally grasp the

opened up her letterbox to find a script from Kreutzer. "Dear Vicky, I guess you

rity culture," Krieps said of Elisabeth. "I remember saying to Marie, 'We are all Sisi

makes people feel seen and not based on whether they are important or not," Kreutzer said. "But I sensed early that this was not good for her as the empress."

When it came time to film the fencing scene, Krieps was feeling everything quite deeply.

"That was a very sad day. It was actually very painful to me. I thought, really? You make a movie about this and this is happening now," she said. "That day my pain had overgrown anything I could bear and I just needed to go somewhere with it. That's why I went out the window."

The only other thought in her mind was: "I hope there's no scaffolding below."

She never really asked her co-star, whom she loves and respects and knows is kind, why he made that decision. Maybe it was unconscious? Maybe his ego took over? But it made her feel connected to something bigger than the film. Kreutzer had kind of forgotten about the window jump somewhere in the blur of filming and postproduction. They had actually even shot another window jumping scene that one was scripted. Then, in the edit, she rediscovered it. The lighting wasn't perfect, but it was raw. And in the end, the unscripted one made the cut.

"It was the first movie I hated doing, but I love watching. When I watch it, I have goosebumps every time because I feel this liberation that we are all so in need of," Krieps said. "Women have such deep, deep wounds over the generations. And we have to talk about it and we have to heal it and we have to get out of it." □



This image released by IFC Films shows Vicky Krieps as Empress Elisabeth in a scene from "Corsage."

Associated Press

whole thing but I felt related to this woman and I felt like she was trapped," Krieps said. "They described her as being very eccentric, riding a lot, wearing a corset all the time, not eating, using exercise equipment. I kept thinking, but why? I had a suspicion that she was sad or angry but I couldn't read anything about that. It stayed with me."

In 2016, after working with Kreutzer on the film "We Used to Be Cool," Krieps asked her if she'd want to do a Sisi movie of their own together. Kreutzer declined.

"Marie thought it was a very bad idea," Krieps said. "She literally said, 'What? No, that's stupid.'"

Kreutzer, who is Austrian, had grown up with the kitschy trilogy and Elisabeth's face on merchandise everywhere. In her memory, she wasn't even sure Krieps was serious, but she did know she wanted to do a period film. So it came as a shock to Krieps when, a few years later, she

were right," an accompanying postcard read.

The film is not your standard costume picture, or even a straightforward biopic for both practical and thematic reasons.

"I knew it would have to have another style," Kreutzer said. "We wanted it to look not as decorated and more simple."

"Corsage" begins as Elisabeth turns 40 and the film has modern flourishes and a soundtrack with music from the likes of French pop star Camille. Some have compared it to Sofia Coppola's "Marie Antoinette," though, as one person told Kreutzer, "less ironic."

"If I were to put it into music terms, 'Marie Antoinette' is pop and 'Corsage' is acoustic," Kreutzer said.

And it came at just at the right time for Krieps, who had just become much more famous after the success of "Phantom Thread," and felt like she'd had her own peek behind the curtain.

"To me, she really seemed like the first victim of celeb-

now because we have Instagram and Facebook and we have become our own victims of our own image.'" The filming was quite difficult. For one, Krieps decided to wear a corset the entire time to really feel what Elisabeth was feeling. This, she admits now, was a mistake, but one she committed to.

"I'm that stubborn," said Krieps, who thanks to long days on set ended up wearing the corset for many more hours than any woman of the era, even Sisi, would have.

It was hard to sit, ride, fence and breathe. She couldn't eat or drink coffee with it on and mostly stuck to smoothies and nighttime eating. She and Kreutzer also decided that she should remain a little isolated and distant from the cast, which was difficult in different ways.

"Normally, she would always talk to everybody and be very close with people. It's really one of her strengths. She's able to connect with people and



Pelé, Brazil's mighty king of 'beautiful game,' has died

By **TALES AZZONI** and **MAURICIO SAVARESE**
Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Pelé, the Brazilian king of soccer who won a record three World Cups and became one of the most commanding sports figures of the last century, died Thursday. He was 82.

The standard-bearer of "the beautiful game" had undergone treatment for colon cancer since 2021. He had been hospitalized for the last month with multiple ailments.

His agent Joe Fraga confirmed his death.

Widely regarded as one of soccer's greatest players, Pelé spent nearly two decades enchanting fans and dazzling opponents as the game's most prolific scorer with Brazilian club Santos and the Brazil national team.

His grace, athleticism and mesmerizing moves transfixed players and fans. He orchestrated a fast, fluid style that revolutionized the sport — a samba-like flair that personified his country's elegance on the field. He carried Brazil to soccer's heights and became a global ambassador for his sport in a journey that began on the streets of Sao Paulo state, where he would kick a sock stuffed with newspapers or rags.

In the conversation about soccer's greatest players, only the late Diego Maradona, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo are mentioned alongside Pelé.

Different sources, counting different sets of games, list Pelé's goal totals anywhere between 650 (league matches) and 1,281 (all senior matches, some against low-level competition.)

The player who would be dubbed "The King" was introduced to the world at 17 at the 1958 World Cup in Sweden, the youngest player ever at the tournament. He was carried off the field on teammates' shoulders after scoring two goals in Brazil's 5-2 victory over the host country in the final.

Injury limited him to just two games when Brazil retained



Brazil's Pele is hoisted on the shoulders of his teammates after Brazil won the World Cup final against Italy, 4-1, in Mexico City's Estadio Azteca, June 21, 1970.

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the world title in 1962, but Pelé was the emblem of his country's World Cup triumph of 1970 in Mexico. He scored in the final and set up Carlos Alberto with a nonchalant pass for the last goal in a 4-1 victory over Italy.

The image of Pelé in a bright, yellow Brazil jersey, with the No. 10 stamped on the back, remains alive with soccer fans everywhere. As does his trademark goal celebration a leap with a right fist thrust high above his head.

Pelé's fame was such that in 1967 factions of a civil war in Nigeria agreed to a brief cease-fire so he could play an exhibition match in the country. He was knighted by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in 1997. When he visited Washington to help popularize the game in North America, it was the U.S. president who stuck out his hand first.

"My name is Ronald Reagan, I'm the president of the United States of America," the host said to his visitor. "But you don't need to introduce yourself because everyone knows who Pelé is."

Pelé was Brazil's first modern Black national hero but rarely spoke about racism in a country where the rich and powerful tend to hail from the white minority.

Opposing fans taunted

Pelé with monkey chants at home and all over the world.

"He said that he would never play if he had to stop every time he heard those chants," said Angelica Basthi, one of Pelé's biographers. "He is key for Black people's pride in Brazil, but never wanted to be a flag-bearer."

Pelé's life after soccer took many forms. He was a politician Brazil's Extraordinary Minister for Sport a wealthy businessman, and an ambassador for UNESCO and the United Nations.

He had roles in movies, soap operas and even composed songs and recorded CDs of popular Brazilian music.

As his health deteriorated, his travels and appearances became less frequent. He was often seen in a wheelchair during his final years and did not attend a ceremony to unveil a statue of him representing Brazil's 1970 World Cup team. Pelé spent his 80th birthday isolated with a few family members at a beach home.

Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, in the small city of Tres Coracoes in the interior of Minas Gerais state on Oct. 23, 1940, Pelé grew up shining shoes to buy his modest soccer gear.

Pelé's talent drew attention when he was 11, and

a local professional player brought him to Santos' youth squads. It didn't take long for him to make it to the senior squad.

Despite his youth and 5-foot-8 frame, he scored against grown men with the same ease he displayed against friends back home. He debuted with the Brazilian club at 16 in 1956, and the club quickly gained worldwide recognition.

The name Pelé came from him mispronouncing the name of a player called Bilé.

He went to the 1958 World Cup as a reserve but became a key player for his country's championship team. His first goal, in which he flicked the ball over the head of a defender and raced around him to volley it home, was voted as one of the best in World Cup history.

The 1966 World Cup in England won by the hosts was a bitter one for Pelé, by then already considered the world's top player. Brazil was knocked out in the group stage and Pelé, angry at the rough treatment, swore it was his last World Cup.

He changed his mind and was rejuvenated in the 1970 World Cup. In a game against England, he struck a header for a certain score, but the great goalkeeper Gordon Banks

flipped the ball over the bar in an astonishing move. Pelé likened the save one of the best in World Cup history to a "salmon climbing up a waterfall."

Later, he scored the opening goal in the final against Italy, his last World Cup match.

In all, Pelé played 114 matches with Brazil, scoring a record 95 goals, including 77 in official matches.

His run with Santos stretched over three decades until he went into semi-retirement after the 1972 season. Wealthy European clubs tried to sign him, but the Brazilian government intervened to keep him from being sold, declaring him a national treasure.

On the field, Pelé's energy, vision and imagination drove a gifted Brazilian national team with a fast, fluid style of play that exemplified "O Jogo Bonito" — Portuguese for "The Beautiful Game."

His 1977 autobiography, "My Life and the Beautiful Game," made the phrase part of soccer's lexicon.

In 1975, he joined the New York Cosmos of the North American Soccer League. Although 34 and past his prime, Pelé gave soccer a higher profile in North America.

He led the Cosmos to the 1977 league title and scored 64 goals in three seasons.

Pelé ended his career on Oct. 1, 1977, in an exhibition between the Cosmos and Santos before a crowd in New Jersey of some 77,000. He played half the game with each club. Among the dignitaries on hand was perhaps the only other athlete whose renown spanned the globe Muhammad Ali.

Pelé would endure difficult times in his personal life, especially when his son Edinho was arrested on drug-related charges. Pelé had two daughters out of wedlock and five children from his first two marriages, to Rosemeri dos Reis Cholbi and Assiria Seixas Lemos. He later married businesswoman Marcia Cibebe Aoki. □



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As he turns 38, LeBron is clear: He still wants title shots

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — It was 2006. LeBron James wasn't even midway through his first stint in Cleveland. He made the playoffs for the first time, was already a globally recognized star and well on his way to becoming the game's best player. As a 21-year-old, he averaged 30.2 points.

Fast forward 16 years. He's left Cleveland, gone to Miami, won two championships, gotten married, became a father of three, gone back to Cleveland, won another championship, left for Los Angeles, won a fourth championship with the Lakers, still a giant star, still in the best-player conversation. As a 37-year-old, he averaged 30.1 points. James turns 38 on Friday, midway through his 20th season. Nobody in NBA history has averaged so many points as a 37-year-old. Not even close. Karl Malone averaged 23.2 points at that age, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar averaged 20.2 and Julius Erving averaged 20.2. There have been 150 players in NBA history who played at 37; the average scoring clip of the other 149 was 8.3 points per game.

Yet here is James, simply not slowing down. He averaged more points at 37 than he did at 22. Or 23. Or 24. Or any other age over the last 16 years.

"I know how feverishly he works on his game," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "Just being in the gym, seeing him in the gym ... you know, he's not just out



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (6) drives around Orlando Magic guard Markelle Fultz (20) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2022, in Orlando, Fla.
Associated Press

there playing his own individual game of H-O-R-S-E. He actually works on the shots and just being ready to be able to strike from any zone or any distance." James is closing in on passing Abdul-Jabbar for the NBA career scoring record they're separated by only 574 points and he's as prolific a scorer as he's ever been.

"I do know how much I put into the game," James said. "I know how much I put into my body, into my mind, and all of those things. But I kind of surprise myself sometimes, just at the level. When you look at the history of the game... doesn't seem like many have played at this level for this many years and this many miles and things on their resume."

Not many. If any. Not at

37, anyway. He averaged not just the 30.1 points, but 8.5 rebounds and 6.2 assists during this lap around the sun. Only six players at that age averaged more rebounds, only four players Steve Nash, Chris Paul, Jason Kidd and John Stockton, four of the best point guards ever averaged more assists at 37.

At his current pace, James could catch Abdul-Jabbar for the scoring record by early February. And he doesn't intend to stop playing anytime soon, either, so that record might be way out of reach by the time James is actually done.

"He constantly works at his craft," said Miami coach Erik Spoelstra, the only coach to win more than one championship with James. "So, he's going to continue to develop new

skills to put in his toolkit. He doesn't get bored with that process. You can tell. He's like a computer. When he sees another player work on something, or do something in the game, he says, 'Oh, I want to try that.' ... He never gets bored with that." The Lakers are 14-21 and are without perennial All-Star big man Anthony Davis, who remains out with a foot injury with no timetable for his return. They're mired near the bottom of the NBA and need a big rally in order to avoid missing the playoffs for a second consecutive season. Since James and Davis led the Lakers to the 2020 NBA title, the team hasn't won a playoff series; it went out in the first round in 2021, and didn't make it in 2022.

James is averaging 27.8 points, 8.1 rebounds and

6.6 assists this season. He's never finished a season with averages that high in all three of those categories not even in any of his four MVP seasons.

"I don't want to finish my career playing at this level, from a team aspect," James said. "I want to still be able to compete for championships because I know what I can still bring to any ballclub with the right pieces."

He'll be a 38-year-old All-Star when the game rolls around in February; only five other players have been in that game at 38 or older. The Lakers are only three games out of the last play-in tournament spot, so it's not like there's no hope for this season.

But he's not playing for All-Star longevity marks, or the chance to squeak into the playoffs, or even scoring records. He doesn't know how much longer he wants to play, but knows what he still wants to do.

"I'm a winner. And I want to win," James said. "I want to win and give myself a chance to win and still compete for championships. That has always been my passion, my goal since I entered the league, an 18-year-old kid out of Akron, Ohio. I know it takes steps to get there. And once you get there, you know how to get there."

"Playing basketball at this level just to be playing basketball, it's not in my DNA. It's not in my DNA anymore. So, we'll see what happens. We'll see how fresh my mind stays over the next couple of years." □